

CONSERVATION

By the Editor

The country now seems to be facing an important crisis in the administration of its wild life. The various conservation forces of the country are agreed that the "remnant" of wild life must be saved. But there is a sharp difference of opinion as to the best method of doing it. Dr. W. T. Hornaday is the spokesman for the great unorganized mass of interested people. He is advocating a general reduction in the bag limit and in the open season as the most effective and prompt means of recovery. On the other hand the American Game Protective and Propagation Association is leading in the advocacy of the principle of game refuges and propagation as the all-sufficient remedy. At present there seems to be a deadlock on the proposition, reduction of bag limit versus game refuges.

Since there are excellent arguments in favor of both methods we wonder why the wild life cannot be given the benefit of both. The power to establish game refuges on the scale proposed by the professional conservationists lies with Congress. The power to bring about a federal reduction in the bag limit seems to rest in the Department of Agriculture, particularly the Biological Survey. The Biological Survey refused to order a reduction in the bag limit, stating that the "Advisory Board" advised against it. The "Advisory Board" seems to be an unofficial group of men who have become prominent in conservation work, whose collective advice is sought by the Biological Survey before any changes can be made in the Regulations under the Migratory Bird Law. The Chairman of this Board is Mr. John B. Burnham, who is also President of the American Game Protective Association. The latter organization is supported and financed by the arms and ammunition manufacturers.

There are now before Congress (unless disposed of before we go to press) two bills which are designed to have a profound effect upon the supply of game birds in the country, and, likewise, upon the sport of hunting. The one is known as the "Migratory Bird Refuge and Marshland Conservation Bill," (technically designated as H.R.7479, S.2607). The other is known as the "Copeland-Merritt Bill," (H.R.10433, S.3580). Most of our readers are likely to be familiar with these bills and their objects. If any are not fully informed we hope that they may become so—in the interest of the welfare of our wild life.

The first of these bills has been before Congress through several sessions, and is variously known as the "Migratory Bird Refuge Bill," the "Public Shooting Grounds Bill," the "Marshland Conservation Bill," etc., etc. It is sponsored by the American Game Protective and Propagation Association, an organization maintained and financially supported, according to the records, by the arms and ammunition manufacturers. It has also won the support of the United States Biological Survey, the National Association of Audubon Societies, and other organizations whose judgments concerning the welfare of our wild life we have, in the past, regarded with greatest confidence. Opposition to this bill has been slow in developing, but is now stronger than ever, and it seems doubtful if the bill will ever pass Congress.

The Copeland-Merritt Bill provides for a general reduction in the federal bag limit on wild fowl, and was presented to Congress only after every possible effort had been made to induce the Biological Survey to make the necessary amendments

in the Regulations under the Migratory Bird Law. This bill is opposed by the American Game Protective Association, the Biological Survey, the Audubon Societies, and almost the same groups as are advocating the Public Shooting Grounds Bill.

We will venture to give here a very brief summary of the literature which we have seen bearing on these two bills. This literature is varied in its nature; some of it is in the form of printed pamphlets, while the rest consists of printed or mimeographed circulars and letters. It is as follows:

1. "Save the Marshlands." This circular is a brief statement in favor of the Migratory Bird Refuge and Marshland Conservation Bill (H.R.7479, S.2607). This bill is a slight modification of the old Bird Refuge and Public Shooting Grounds Bill, which had been before the 67th and 68th Congress. This circular was very widely distributed.

2. "Wasting America's Game Birds." Published January 5, 1926. We find in this booklet 61 pages of facts and arguments in support of a reduction in the federal bag limit on game birds. It is signed by a large number of people composing the "National Committee of One Hundred," but we may assume that the guiding mind in its preparation was Dr. W. T. Hornaday. It is a convincing document. Following this showing a bill, known as the Copeland-Merritt Bill (H.R.10433, S.3580), was introduced in Congress. This bill provides for a reasonable reduction in the bag limit on practically all migratory game birds, and is a definite step in the interest of game birds. It is opposed by the powder and ammunition interests, as well as by some recognized conservation authorities. No one has yet been able to point out any selfish motive behind this bill.

3. "Our Migratory Wild Fowl and Present Conditions Affecting Their Abundance." By E. W. Nelson, Chief, U. S. Bureau of Biological Survey. Issued March, 1926. This appears to be a hastily prepared document aiming to show that ducks and geese have not been materially decreased in numbers in recent years; and that such decrease as there may be is attributable to such causes as "extraordinary weather conditions" (page 3), "scanty rainfall," "drainage" (page 17), "losses by disease" (page 14), etc. The importance of a reduction in bag limit is minimized and opposed.

4. "Federal Power and Duck Bag Limits: Facts. A Study." Bulletin No. 6, National Association of Audubon Societies. Issued about May 1, 1926. This is an anonymous article of sixteen pages, issued and very widely circulated by the Audubon Societies as a part of the propaganda in opposition to a reduction in the federal bag limit on wild fowl. In our opinion it is a highly prejudiced argument, and unworthy of the support of the organization which has sponsored it. The mere fact of anonymity immediately raises the question of sincerity. We conclude that the Audubon organization has considerably modified its original platform and purpose.

5. Extension of Remarks of Hon. Fiorello H. La Guardia, of New York, in the House of Representatives on Thursday, April 27, 1926. The speech was in opposition to the Migratory Bird Refuge and Marshland Conservation Bill (H.R.7479, S.2607) on the ground that it created, not sanctuaries, but shooting grounds. It also pointed out the selfish interest of the American Game Protective Association in supporting this bill. On page 5 we find the following quotation

from a letter said to have been written to "one of the ammunition makers" by the President of this Association:

The sentimentalists led by Doctor Hornaday are demanding cuts in the bag limits and seasons, which if carried to the logical conclusion means the reduction of shooting opportunities to the vanishing point. Of course, if this happens, the sale of firearms and ammunition will be seriously affected.

6. "Save the Marsh Lands." This is the same piece of matter as mentioned above under (1), but in this case sent out from Oshkosh, Wisconsin, in the stamped envelope of the National Campaign Committee, Game Refuge Bill, 2273 Woolworth Building, New York, N. Y. Oshkosh is known to be a center of an industry which harvests native wild duck foods for the market. This industry is dependent upon the sport of wild fowl hunting.

7. A letter dated July 25, 1926, signed by the Chairman and Secretary of the National Committee of One Hundred to Retard the Extermination of American Game Birds and to Oppose Wasteful Killing. This letter is a public protest against Bulletin No. 6 of the Audubon Societies, mentioned above, and remarks that by its "opposition to lower federal bag limits, the National Association of Audubon Societies is recklessly ignoring the spirit in which it was founded and the best traditions of its past." Accompanying this letter is a printed circular entitled, "A Reply to Misleading and Unfair Propaganda Against Reducing the Bag Limit on Ducks."

8. A letter dated August 6, 1926, signed by the officers of the National Committee of One Hundred, accompanied by a printed circular entitled, "A Move for a New Federal Game Act." This is a statement of policy and program, and an appeal for financial aid, by the forces supporting the Copeland-Merritt Bill (H.R.10433).

9. "Who's Who and Why." This is a printed circular distributed on October 12, 1926, from the office of Arthur D. Holthaus, 5350 Waterman Ave., St. Louis, Missouri. This is a reprint of the speech of Hon. Fiorella H. LaGuardia in the House of Representatives. It is very good reading, and perhaps copies of it may still be obtained from the address given above.

10. "New Game Refuge Issue Sharply Defined—No Federal Millions for High Limit Duck Killers." Received November 13, 1926. This is newspaper material sent out by the National Committee of One Hundred. It is controversial, but concludes with the advice that "all states collect and keep all the hunting-license fees of their sportsmen, and expend them within their own boundaries."

11. "Do We Want Federal Super Wardenship?" Received November 23, 1926, from Mr. Holthaus, of St. Louis. This is a reprint of an editorial in the November number of *Forest and Stream*, which is opposed to the Bird Refuge and Marshland Conservation Bill (H.R.7479, S.2607) for various reasons.

12. Speech of Hon. William H. King, of Utah, in the Senate of the United States, Monday, May 24, 1926. From the Congressional Record. Received December 2, 1926. This is a lengthy and instructive document which cannot be summarized here. It is headed as follows: "The Gunmakers' Migratory Bird Bill. The question before us is this: Is Congress willing to establish public shooting grounds upon which the migratory birds, under the protection of the treaty with Canada, may be slaughtered at the command of the shotgun and

shotgun shell manufacturers? There are but two objectives in this bill—to afford shooting grounds to promote the sale of shotgun shells and to increase the bureaucratic power of the Biological Survey, not over the migratory birds, but over the people of the country. The gunmakers must get out of the conservation situation. The way to get them out is to defeat this bill.”

13. “The Persecuted Game Birds Demand a Square Deal, but NOT the Passage of the Public-Shooting-Grounds Bill.” Issued December 10, 1926, by the Permanent Wild Life Protection Fund.

14. “Sportsmen and Government Officials Discuss Welfare of Wild Fowl.” Issued as a news-letter by the Press Service of the Department of Agriculture, January 21, 1927. We learn here that a meeting was held in the United States National Museum on January 29, and presided over by R. W. Dunlap, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture. The question of bag limit was, apparently, the chief subject of discussion. The letter closes with this statement: “The general feeling expressed was against any change in the existing regulations on bag limits, but many felt that the most effective additional protection needed for the birds was a shortening of the open seasons.” It goes without saying that, with proper care in the selection of individuals, a meeting may be had which will take any desired action upon any debatable question.

15. “The Unfinished Treaty.” By Jack Miner, of Kingsville, Ontario. Received January 27, 1927. This mimeographed article of eleven closely printed pages is, in many respects, the best reading we have seen recently on the subject of bird protection. It contains a merited rebuke to the National Association of Audubon Societies for its part in the issuance of “Bulletin No. 6.”

It is a wholesome, whole-hearted plea for the protection of the wild fowl, and the author is emphatically in favor of the reduced bag limits. We notice that this article has been fully reprinted in the February number of the *Illustrated Canadian Forest and Outdoors*, 51 Sparks Street, Ottawa, Canada. This magazine is twenty cents per copy and we hope that a great many will take the trouble to secure a copy and read Jack Miner’s plea, under the title, “A Heart to Heart Talk.”

16. “Paul G. Redington is Named Chief of Biological Survey.” This is the heading of a news-letter issued February 12, 1927, by the Press Service of the Department of Agriculture. Doctor E. W. Nelson has been associated with the Department of Agriculture since 1890, and has been Chief of the Biological Survey since 1916. Beginning in the 70’s Dr. Nelson has been an indefatigable explorer and student of the life of the northland. His scientific output has been large and of importance. If he has made an error in directing the Biological Survey in policy on the matter of bag limits, we may believe that it is one of judgment and not of heart. The newly appointed Director of the Survey has been chosen outside the personnel of the latter. We do not know what may be his views on the problem of bag limits. We hope, however, that he may be free from the domination of the Advisory Board, the American Game Protective Association, or any other outside organization.